

News From the Field

Putting the Plan to the Test

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During the last year, local health departments, emergency management agencies and hospitals throughout Indiana have been working diligently to develop mass prophylaxis plans for each county. These plans were developed in response to the potential need to prophylax or vaccinate all Indiana residents within four days. The initial plan addressed administering smallpox vaccine in the event of the re-emergence of smallpox. Currently, plans are being developed that could be used in response to any public health emergency.

All county mass prophylaxis plans were submitted to the Indiana State Department of Health by April 2, 2004. These plans have to be considered living documents that need to be revised, enhanced and tested to ensure that they are viable and manageable.

Dr. Janice Carson, Health Officer of St. Joseph County, has decided to put that county's plan to a full-scale test. In late May, the St. Joseph County Health Department will be conducting a half-day bioterrorism drill to test the St. Joseph County mass prophylaxis plan and determine the total number of patients that can be processed in the clinic in one hour. **In order for this drill to be successful, many volunteers from around the state are needed.** There will be no observers for this exercise. Anyone wishing to see how the clinic will work will participate as a patient and go through the clinic process. The St. Joseph County Health Department hopes to have approximately 300 individuals who can participate. Volunteers are needed to help staff the clinic as either mass prophylaxis clinic volunteers or as potential clients in the clinic.

If you or your county officials are interested in participating in this important trial, please contact Heather Kuehnle, BT Coordinator/Epidemiologist for the St. Joseph County Health Department at 1-574-245-6744 or at hkuehnle@co.st-joseph.in.us. You will be sent an invitation with date, time and place. This is a great learning opportunity for all who have developed plans over the past year.

